



March 22, 2005

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, the oldest and largest organization representing the interests of hospice and palliative care providers, professionals, volunteers, caregivers, patients and families, I want to respectfully request that you join Senators Bill Nelson, Lugar and Rockefeller as a cosponsor of a bipartisan effort, "S. 347, The Advance Directives Improvement and Education Act of 2005."

The legislation recognizes the importance of advance care planning and Senator Nelson's leadership in crafting this legislation is greatly appreciated. We think it is critically important to educate Americans about the need for these critical documents and support the goal of encouraging all Medicare beneficiaries to discuss advance directives with both their physicians and families.

In September of 2004, NHPCO was awarded a grant by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to establish a new program entitled "Caring Connections" which is intended to build upon previous efforts to educate and empower consumers with timely information about end of life care. While the work of the "Caring Connections" program is proceeding, this legislative effort stands apart from that project, although both seek to build consumer and community awareness of and provide means to access, in a timely fashion, quality end of life services. All of these efforts are focused toward providing resources, information and motivation for actively learning about end of life resources. Ultimately, we want to honor a patients and families wishes.

Again, we want to encourage you to cosponsor the bill and join others in the support of this important legislation. The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization looks forward to working to secure passage of this vital legislative initiative.

Sincerely,

J. Donald Schumacher , PsyD  
President and CEO